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THE WHITE BEES

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THE WHITE BEES AND OTHER POEMS BY HENRY VAN DYKE

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THE WHITE BEES AND OTHER POEMS

36X 723

THE WHITE BEES

I

LEGEND

LONG ago Apollo called to Aristæus, youngest
of the shepherds,
Saying, "I will make you keeper of my bees."
Golden were the hives, and golden was the honey;
golden, too, the music,
Where the honey-makers hummed among the
trees.

Happy Aristæus loitered in the garden, wandered
in the orchard,
Careless and contented, indolent and free;
Lightly took his labour, lightly took his pleasure,
till the fated moment
When across his pathway came Eurydice.

Then her eyes enkindled burning love within him;
drove him wild with longing,
For the perfect sweetness of her flower-like
face;
Eagerly he followed, while she fled before him,
over mead and mountain,
On through field and forest, in a breathless
race.

But the nymph, in flying, trod upon a serpent;
like a dream she vanished;
Pluto's chariot bore her down among the dead;
Lonely Aristæus, sadly home returning, found his
garden empty,
All the hives deserted, all the music fled.

Mournfully bewailing, — "ah, my honey-makers,
where have you departed?" —
Far and wide he sought them, over sea and
shore;
Foolish is the tale that says he ever found them,
brought them home in triumph, —
Joys that once escape us fly for evermore.

Yet I dream that somewhere, clad in downy
whiteness, dwell the honey-makers,
In aerial gardens that no mortal sees:
And at times returning, lo, they flutter round us,
gathering mystic harvest, —
So I weave the legend of the long-lost bees.

II

THE SWARMING OF THE BEES

I

WHO can tell the hiding of the white bees' nest?
Who can trace the guiding of their swift home flight?
Far would be his riding on a life-long quest:
Surely ere it ended would his beard grow white.

Never in the coming of the rose-red Spring,
Never in the passing of the wine-red Fall,
May you hear the humming of the white bee's wing
Murmur o'er the meadow, ere the night bells call.

Wait till winter hardens in the cold grey sky,
Wait till leaves are fallen and the brooks all freeze,
Then above the gardens where the dead flowers lie,
Swarm the merry millions of the wild white bees.

II

Out of the high-built airy hive,
Deep in the clouds that veil the sun,
Look how the first of the swarm arrive;
Timidly venturing, one by one,
Down through the tranquil air,
Wavering here and there,
Large, and lazy in flight, —
Caught by a lift of the breeze,
Tangled among the naked trees, —
Dropping then, without a sound,
Feather-white, feather-light,
To their rest on the ground.

III

Thus the swarming is begun.
Count the leaders, every one
Perfect as a perfect star
Till the slow descent is done.
Look beyond them, see how far
Down the vistas dim and grey,
Multitudes are on the way.
Now a sudden brightness
Dawns within the sombre day,
Over fields of whiteness;
And the sky is swiftly alive
With the flutter and the flight
Of the shimmering bees, that pour
From the hidden door of the hive
Till you can count no more.

IV

Now on the branches of hemlock and pine
Thickly they settle and cluster and swing,
Bending them low; and the trellised vine
And the dark elm-boughs are traced with a line
Of beauty wherever the white bees cling.
Now they are hiding the wrecks of the flowers,
    Softly, softly, covering all,
Over the grave of the summer hours
    Spreading a silver pall.
Now they are building the broad roof ledge,
Into a cornice smooth and fair,
Moulding the terrace, from edge to edge,
Into the sweep of a marble stair.
Wonderful workers, swift and dumb,
Numberless myriads, still they come,
Thronging ever faster, faster, faster!
Where is their queen? Who is their master?
The gardens are faded, the fields are frore, —
How will they fare in a world so bleak?
Where is the hidden honey they seek?
What is the sweetness they toil to store
In the desolate day, where no blossoms gleam?
    Forgetfulness and a dream!

V

But now the fretful wind awakes;
I hear him girding at the trees;
He strikes the bending boughs, and shakes
The quiet clusters of the bees
    To powdery drift;
  He tosses them away,
  He drives them like spray;
He makes them veer and shift
  Around his blustering path.
  In clouds blindly whirling,
  In rings madly swirling,
  Full of crazy wrath,
So furious and fast they fly
They blur the earth and blot the sky
    In wild, white mirk.
They fill the air with frozen wings
And tiny, angry, icy stings;
They blind the eyes, and choke the breath,
They dance a maddening dance of death
    Around their work,
Sweeping the cover from the hill,
Heaping the hollows deeper still,
Effacing every line and mark,
And swarming, storming in the dark
    Through the long night;
Until, at dawn, the wind lies down,
    Weary of fight.
The last torn cloud, with trailing gown,
Passes the open gates of light;
And the white bees are lost in flight.

VI

Look how the landscape glitters wide and still,
    Bright with a pure surprise!
The day begins with joy, and all past ill,
    Buried in white oblivion, lies
Beneath the snowdrifts under crystal skies.
New hope, new love, new life, new cheer,
  Flow in the sunrise beam, —
  The gladness of Apollo when he sees,
Upon the bosom of the wintry year,
The honey-harvest of his wild white bees,
    Forgetfulness and a dream!

III

LEGEND

LISTEN, my beloved, while the silver morning,
like a tranquil vision,
Fills the world around us and our hearts with
peace;
Quiet is the close of Aristæus' legend, happy is
the ending —
Listen while I tell you how he found release.

Many months he wandered far away in sadness,
desolately thinking
Only of the vanished joys he could not find;
Till the great Apollo, pitying his shepherd, loosed
him from the burden
Of a dark, reluctant, backward-looking mind.

Then he saw around him all the changeful beauty
of the changing seasons,
In the world-wide regions where his journey
lay;
Birds that sang to cheer him, flowers that bloomed
beside him, stars that shone to guide him, —
Traveller's joy was plenty all along the way!

Everywhere he journeyed strangers made him
welcome, listened while he taught them
Secret lore of field and forest he had learned:
How to train the vines and make the olives fruitful; how to guard the sheepfolds;
How to stay the fever when the dog-star burned.

Friendliness and blessing followed in his footsteps; richer were the harvests,
Happier the dwellings, wheresoe'er he came;
Little children loved him, and he left behind him, in the hour of parting,
Memories of kindness and a god-like name.

So he travelled onward, desolate no longer, patient in his seeking,
Reaping all the wayside comfort of his quest;
Till at last in Thracia, high upon Mount Hæmus, far from human dwelling,
Weary Aristæus laid him down to rest.

Then the honey-makers, clad in downy whiteness, fluttered soft around him,
Wrapt him in a dreamful slumber pure and deep.
This is life, beloved: first a sheltered garden, then a troubled journey,
Joy and pain of seeking,—and at last we sleep!

NEW YEAR'S EVE

NEW YEAR'S EVE

I

THE other night I had a dream, most clear
And comforting, complete
In every line, a crystal sphere,
And full of intimate and secret cheer.
Therefore I will repeat
That vision, dearest heart, to you,
As of a thing not feigned, but very true,
Yes, true as ever in my life befell;
And you, perhaps, can tell
Whether my dream was really sad or sweet.

II

The shadows flecked the elm-embowered street
I knew so well, long, long ago;
And on the pillared porch where Marguerite
Had sat with me, the moonlight lay like snow.
But she, my comrade and my friend of youth,
Most gaily wise,
Most innocently loved, —
She of the blue-grey eyes
That ever smiled and ever spoke the truth, —
From that familiar dwelling, where she moved
Like mirth incarnate in the years before,
Had gone into the hidden house of Death.
I thought the garden wore
White mourning for her blessed innocence,
And the syringa's breath
Came from the corner by the fence,
Where she had made her rustic seat,
With fragrance passionate, intense,
As if it breathed a sigh for Marguerite.
My heart was heavy with a sense
Of something good forever gone. I sought
Vainly for some consoling thought,
Some comfortable word that I could say
To the sad father, whom I visited again
For the first time since she had gone away.
The bell rang shrill and lonely, — then
The door was opened, and I sent my name
To him, — but ah! 't was Marguerite who came!

There in the dear old dusky room she stood
Beneath the lamp, just as she used to stand,
In tender mocking mood.
" You did not ask for me," she said,
" And so I will not let you take my hand;
" But I must hear what secret talk you planned
" With father. Come, my friend, be good,
" And tell me your affairs of state:
" Why you have stayed away and made me wait
" So long. Sit down beside me here, —
" And, do you know, it seemed a year
" Since we have talked together, — why so late? "

Amazed, incredulous, confused with joy
I hardly dared to show,
And stammering like a boy,
I took the place she showed me at her side;
And then the talk flowed on with brimming tide
Through the still night,
While she with influence light
Controlled it, as the moon the flood.
She knew where I had been, what I had done,
What work was planned, and what begun;
My troubles, failures, fears she understood,
And touched them with a heart so kind,
That every care was melted from my mind,

And every hope grew bright,
And life seemed moving on to happy ends.
(Ah, what self-beggared fool was he
That said a woman cannot be
The very best of friends?)
Then there were memories of old times,
Recalled with many a gentle jest;
And at the last she brought the book of rhymes
We made together, trying to translate
The Songs of Heine (hers were always best).
"Now come," she said,
"To-night we will collaborate
"Again; I'll put you to the test.
"Here's one I never found the way to do, —
"The simplest are the hardest ones, you know, —
"I give this song to you."
And then she read:

Mein kind, wir waren Kinder,
Zwei Kinder, jung und froh.

* * * * * * *

But all the while a silent question stirred
Within me, though I dared not speak the word:
"Is it herself, and is she truly here,
"And was I dreaming when I heard
"That she was dead last year?
"Or was it true, and is she but a shade
"Who brings a fleeting joy to eye and ear,
"Cold though so kind, and will she gently fade
"When her sweet ghostly part is played
"And the light-curtain falls at dawn of day?"

But while my heart was troubled by this fear
So deeply that I could not speak it out,
Lest all my happiness should disappear,
I thought me of a cunning way
To hide the question and dissolve the doubt.
"Will you not give me now your hand,
"Dear Marguerite," I asked, "to touch and hold,
"That by this token I may understand
"You are the same true friend you were of old?"
She answered with a smile so bright and calm
It seemed as if I saw new stars arise
In the deep heaven of her eyes;
And smiling so, she laid her palm
In mine. Dear God, it was not cold
But warm with vital heat!
"You live!" I cried, "you live, dear Marguerite!"
Then I awoke; but strangely comforted,
Although I knew again that she was dead.

III

Yes, there's the dream! And was it sweet or sad?
Dear mistress of my waking and my sleep,
Present reward of all my heart's desire,
Watching with me beside the winter fire,
Interpret now this vision that I had.
But while you read the meaning, let me keep
The touch of you: for the Old Year with storm
Is passing through the midnight, and doth shake
The corners of the house, — and oh! my heart would break
Unless both dreaming and awake
My hand could feel your hand was warm, warm, warm!

SONGS FOR AMERICA

SEA-GULLS OF MANHATTAN

CHILDREN of the elemental mother,
Born upon some lonely island shore
Where the wrinkled ripples run and whisper,
Where the crested billows plunge and roar;
Long-winged, tireless roamers and adventurers,
Fearless breasters of the wind and sea,
In the far-off solitary places
I have seen you floating wild and free!

Here the high-built cities rise around you;
Here the cliffs that tower east and west,
Honeycombed with human habitations,
Have no hiding for the sea-bird's nest:
Here the river flows begrimed and troubled;
Here the hurrying, panting vessels fume,
Restless, up and down the watery highway,
While a thousand chimneys vomit gloom.

Toil and tumult, conflict and confusion,
  Clank and clamor of the vast machine
Human hands have built for human bondage —
  Yet amid it all you float serene;
Circling, soaring, sailing, swooping lightly
  Down to glean your harvest from the wave;
In your heritage of air and water,
  You have kept the freedom Nature gave.

Even so the wild-woods of Manhattan
  Saw your wheeling flocks of white and grey;
Even so you fluttered, followed, floated,
  Round the *Half-Moon* creeping up the bay;
Even so your voices creaked and chattered,
  Laughing shrilly o'er the tidal rips,
While your black and beady eyes were glistening
  Round the sullen British prison-ships.

Children of the elemental mother,
  Fearless floaters 'mid the double blue,
From the crowded boats that cross the ferries
  Many a longing heart goes out to you.
Though the cities climb and close around us,
  Something tells us that our souls are free,
While the sea-gulls fly above the harbor,
  While the river flows to meet the sea!

URBS CORONATA

(Song for the City College of New York)

O YOUNGEST of the giant brood
Of cities far-renowned;
In wealth and power thou hast passed
Thy rivals at a bound;
And now thou art a queen, New York;
And how wilt thou be crowned?

"Weave me no palace-wreath of pride,"
The royal city said;
"Nor forge an iron fortress-wall
To frown upon my head;
But let me wear a diadem
Of Wisdom's towers instead."

And so upon her island height
She worked her will forsooth,
She set upon her rocky brow
A citadel of Truth,
A house of Light, a home of Thought,
A shrine of noble Youth.

Stand here, ye City College towers,
  And look both up and down;
Remember all who wrought for you
  Within the toiling town;
Remember all they thought for you,
And all the hopes they brought for you,
  And *be* the City's Crown.

AMERICA

I LOVE thine inland seas,
Thy groves of giant trees,
Thy rolling plains;
Thy rivers' mighty sweep,
Thy mystic canyons deep,
Thy mountains wild and steep,
All thy domains;

Thy silver Eastern strands,
Thy Golden Gate that stands
Wide to the West;
Thy flowery Southland fair,
Thy sweet and crystal air,—
O land beyond compare,
Thee I love best!

Additional verses for the National Hymn, March, 1906.

DOORS OF DARING

THE mountains that enfold the vale
With walls of granite, steep and high,
Invite the fearless foot to scale
Their stairway toward the sky.

The restless, deep, dividing sea
That flows and foams from shore to shore,
Calls to its sunburned chivalry,
"Push out, set sail, explore!"

And all the bars at which we fret,
That seem to prison and control,
Are but the doors of daring, set
Ajar before the soul.

Say not, "Too poor," but freely give;
Sigh not, "Too weak," but boldly try.
You never can begin to live
Until you dare to die.

A HOME SONG

I READ within a poet's book
A word that starred the page:
"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage!"

Yes, that is true; and something more
You 'll find, where'er you roam,
That marble floors and gilded walls
Can never make a home.

But every house where Love abides,
And Friendship is a guest,
Is surely home, and home-sweet-home:
For there the heart can rest.

A NOON SONG

THERE are songs for the morning and songs for the night,
For sunrise and sunset, the stars and the moon;
But who will give praise to the fulness of light,
And sing us a song of the glory of noon?
Oh, the high noon, and the clear noon,
The noon with golden crest;
When the sky burns, and the sun turns
With his face to the way of the west!

How swiftly he rose in the dawn of his strength;
How slowly he crept as the morning wore by;
Ah, steep was the climbing that led him at length
To the height of his throne in the blue summer sky.
Oh, the long toil, and the slow toil,
The toil that may not rest,
Till the sun looks down from his journey's crown,
To the wonderful way of the west!

Then a quietness falls over meadow and hill,
The wings of the wind in the forest are furled;
The river runs softly, the birds are all still,
And the workers are resting all over the world.
Oh, the good hour, and the kind hour,
The hour that calms the breast!
Little inn half-way on the road of the day,
Where it follows the turn to the west!

There 's a plentiful feast in the maple-tree shade,
The lilt of a song to an old-fashioned tune;
The talk of a friend, and the kiss of a maid,
To sweeten the cup that we drink to the noon.
Oh, the deep noon, and the full noon,
Of all the day the best!
When the sky burns, and the sun turns
To his home by the way of the west!

AN AMERICAN IN EUROPE

'TIS fine to see the Old World, and travel up and down
Among the famous palaces and cities of renown,
To admire the crumbly castles and the statues of the kings, —
But now I think I 've had enough of antiquated things.

So it 's home again, and home again, America for me!
My heart is turning home again, and there I long to be,
In the land of youth and freedom beyond the ocean bars,
Where the air is full of sunlight and the flag is full of stars.

Oh, London is a man's town, there 's power in the air;
And Paris is a woman's town, with flowers in her hair;
And it 's sweet to dream in Venice, and it 's great to study Rome;
But when it comes to living there is no place like home.

I like the German fir-woods, in green battalions drilled;
I like the gardens of Versailles with flashing fountains filled;
But, oh, to take your hand, my dear, and ramble for a day
In the friendly western woodland where Nature has her way!

I know that Europe's wonderful, yet something seems to lack:
The Past is too much with her, and the people looking back.
But the glory of the Present is to make the Future free, —
We love our land for what she is and what she is to be.

Oh, it's home again, and home again, America for me!
I want a ship that's westward bound to plough the rolling sea,
To the blessèd Land of Room Enough beyond the ocean bars,
Where the air is full of sunlight and the flag is full of stars.

THE ANCESTRAL DWELLINGS

DEAR to my heart are the ancestral dwellings
of America,
Dearer than if they were haunted by ghosts of
royal splendour;
These are the homes that were built by the brave
beginners of a nation,
They are simple enough to be great, and full of
a friendly dignity.

I love the old white farmhouses nestled in New
England valleys,
Ample and long and low, with elm-trees feather-
ing over them:
Borders of box in the yard, and lilacs, and old-
fashioned flowers,
A fan-light above the door, and little square panes
in the windows,
The wood-shed piled with maple and birch and
hickory ready for winter,
The gambrel-roof with its garret crowded with
household relics, —
All the tokens of prudent thrift and the spirit of
self-reliance.

I love the look of the shingled houses that front
the ocean;
Their backs are bowed, and their lichened sides
are weather-beaten;
Soft in their colour as grey pearls, they are full
of patience and courage.
They seem to grow out of the rocks, there is
something indomitable about them:
Facing the briny wind in a lonely land they stand
undaunted,
While the thin blue line of smoke from the
square-built chimney rises,
Telling of shelter for man, with room for a hearth
and a cradle.

I love the stately southern mansions with their
tall white columns,
They look through avenues of trees, over fields
where the cotton is growing;
I can see the flutter of white frocks along their
shady porches,
Music and laughter float from the windows, the
yards are full of hounds and horses.
They have all ridden away, yet the houses have
not forgotten,
They are proud of their name and place, and
their doors are always open,
For the thing they remember best is the pride
of their ancient hospitality.

In the towns I love the discreet and tranquil
Quaker dwellings,
With their demure brick faces and immaculate
white-stone doorsteps;
And the gabled houses of the Dutch, with their
high stoops and iron railings,
(I can see their little brass knobs shining in the
morning sunlight);
And the solid houses of the descendants of the
Puritans,
Fronting the street with their narrow doors and
dormer-windows;
And the triple-galleried, many-pillared mansions
of Charleston,
Standing sideways in their gardens full of roses
and magnolias.

Yes, they are all dear to my heart, and in my
eyes they are beautiful;
For under their roofs were nourished the thoughts
that have made the nation;
The glory and strength of America came from
her ancestral dwellings.

FRANCIS MAKEMIE

(Presbyter of Christ in America, 1683–1708)

TO thee, plain hero of a rugged race,
We bring the meed of praise too long delayed!
Thy fearless word and faithful work have made
For God's Republic firmer path and place
In this New World: thou hast proclaimed the grace
And power of Christ in many a forest glade,
Teaching the truth that leaves men unafraid
Of frowning tyranny or death's dark face.

Oh, who can tell how much we owe to thee,
Makemie, and to labour such as thine,
For all that makes America the shrine
Of faith untrammeled and of conscience free?
Stand here, grey stone, and consecrate the sod
Where rests this brave Scotch-Irish man of God!

NATIONAL MONUMENTS

COUNT not the cost of honour to the dead!
The tribute that a mighty nation pays
To those who loved her well in former days
Means more than gratitude for glories fled;
For every noble man that she hath bred,
Lives in the bronze and marble that we raise,
Immortalized by art's immortal praise,
To lead our sons as he our fathers led.

These monuments of manhood strong and high
Do more than forts or battle-ships to keep
Our dear-bought liberty. They fortify
The heart of youth with valour wise and deep;
They build eternal bulwarks, and command
Eternal strength to guard our native land.

IN PRAISE OF POETS

MOTHER EARTH

MOTHER of all the high-strung poets and singers departed,
Mother of all the grass that weaves over their graves the glory of the field,
Mother of all the manifold forms of life, deep-bosomed, patient, impassive,
Silent brooder and nurse of lyrical joys and sorrows!
Out of thee, yea, surely out of the fertile depth below thy breast,
Issued in some strange way, thou lying motionless, voiceless,
All these songs of nature, rhythmical, passionate, yearning,
Coming in music from earth, but not unto earth returning.

Dust are the blood-red hearts that beat in time to these measures,
Thou hast taken them back to thyself, secretly, irresistibly
Drawing the crimson currents of life down, down, down
Deep into thy bosom again, as a river is lost in the sand.

But the souls of the singers have entered into
the songs that revealed them, —
Passionate songs, immortal songs of joy and
grief and love and longing:
Floating from heart to heart of thy children, they
echo above thee:
Do they not utter thy heart, the voices of those
that love thee?

Long hadst thou lain like a queen transformed by
some old enchantment
Into an alien shape, mysterious, beautiful, speech-
less,
Knowing not who thou wert, till the touch of thy
Lord and Lover
Working within thee awakened the man-child to
breathe thy secret.
All of thy flowers and birds and forests and flow-
ing waters
Are but enchanted forms to embody the life of
the spirit;
Thou thyself, earth-mother, in mountain and
meadow and ocean,
Holdest the poem of God, eternal thought and
emotion.

MILTON

I

LOVER of beauty, walking on the height
Of pure philosophy and tranquil song;
Born to behold the visions that belong
To those who dwell in melody and light;
Milton, thou spirit delicate and bright!
What drew thee down to join the Roundhead throng
Of iron-sided warriors, rude and strong,
Fighting for freedom in a world half night?

Lover of Liberty at heart wast thou,
Above all beauty bright, all music clear:
To thee she bared her bosom and her brow,
Breathing her virgin promise in thine ear,
And bound thee to her with a double vow, —
Exquisite Puritan, grave Cavalier!

II

The cause, the cause for which thy soul resigned
  Her singing robes to battle on the plain,
  Was won, O poet, and was lost again;
And lost the labour of thy lonely mind
On weary tasks of prose. What wilt thou find
  To comfort thee for all the toil and pain?
  What solace, now thy sacrifice is vain
And thou art left forsaken, poor, and blind?

Like organ-music comes the deep reply:
  "The cause of truth looks lost, but shall be
      won.
For God hath given to mine inward eye
  Vision of England soaring to the sun.
And granted me great peace before I die,
  In thoughts of lowly duty bravely done."

III

O bend again above thine organ-board,
  Thou blind old poet longing for repose!
  Thy Master claims thy service not with those
Who only stand and wait for his reward.
He pours the heavenly gift of song restored
  Into thy breast, and bids thee nobly close
  A noble life, with poetry that flows
In mighty music of the major chord.

Where hast thou learned this deep, majestic strain,
  Surpassing all thy youthful lyric grace,
To sing of Paradise? Ah, not in vain
  The griefs that won at Dante's side thy place,
And made thee, Milton, by thy years of pain,
  The loftiest poet of the Saxon race!

WORDSWORTH

WORDSWORTH, thy music like a river rolls
Among the mountains, and thy song is fed
By living springs far up the watershed;
No whirling flood nor parching drought controls
The crystal current: even on the shoals
It murmurs clear and sweet; and when its bed
Darkens below mysterious cliffs of dread,
Thy voice of peace grows deeper in our souls.

But thou in youth hast known the breaking stress
Of passion, and hast trod despair's dry ground
Beneath black thoughts that wither and destroy.
Ah, wanderer, led by human tenderness
Home to the heart of Nature, thou hast found
The hidden Fountain of Recovered Joy.

KEATS

THE melancholy gift Aurora gained
From Jove, that her sad lover should not see
The face of death, no goddess asked for thee,
My Keats! But when the crimson blood-drop stained
Thy pillow, thou didst read the fate ordained, —
Brief life, wild love, a flight of poesy!
And then, — a shadow fell on Italy:
Thy star went down before its brightness waned.

Yet thou hast won the gift Tithonus missed:
Never to feel the pain of growing old,
Nor lose the blissful sight of beauty's truth,
But with the ardent lips that music kissed
To breathe thy song, and, ere thy heart grew cold,
Become the Poet of Immortal Youth.

SHELLEY

KNIGHT-ERRANT of the Never-ending
Quest,
And Minstrel of the Unfulfilled Desire;
For ever tuning thy frail earthly lyre
To some unearthly music, and possessed
With painful passionate longing to invest
The golden dream of Love's immortal fire
In mortal robes of beautiful attire,
And fold perfection to thy throbbing breast!

What wonder, Shelley, if the restless wave
Should claim thee and the leaping flame consume
Thy drifted form on Viareggio's beach?
Fate to thy body gave a fitting grave,
And bade thy soul ride on with fiery plume,
Thy wild song ring in ocean's yearning speech!

ROBERT BROWNING

HOW blind the toil that burrows like the mole,
In winding graveyard pathways underground,
For Browning's lineage! What if men have found
Poor footmen or rich merchants on the roll
Of his forbears? Did they beget his soul?
Nay, for he came of ancestry renowned
Through all the world, — the poets laurel-crowned
With wreaths from which the autumn takes no toll.

The blazons on his coat-of-arms are these:
The flaming sign of Shelley's heart on fire,
The golden globe of Shakespeare's human stage,
The staff and scrip of Chaucer's pilgrimage,
The rose of Dante's deep, divine desire,
The tragic mask of wise Euripides.

LONGFELLOW

IN a great land, a new land, a land full of labour
and riches and confusion,
Where there were many running to and fro, and
shouting, and striving together,
In the midst of the hurry and the troubled noise,
I heard the voice of one singing.

"What are you doing there, O man, singing
quietly amid all this tumult?
This is the time for new inventions, mighty
shoutings, and blowings of the trumpet."
But he answered, "I am only shepherding my
sheep with music."

So he went along his chosen way, keeping his
little flock around him;
And he paused to listen, now and then, beside
the antique fountains,
Where the faces of forgotten gods were refreshed
with musically falling waters;

Or he sat for a while at the blacksmith's door,
and heard the cling-clang of the anvils;
Or he rested beneath old steeples full of bells,
that showered their chimes upon him;
Or he walked along the border of the sea, drinking in the long roar of the billows;

Or he sunned himself in the pine-scented shipyard, amid the tattoo of the mallets;
Or he leaned on the rail of the bridge, letting his thoughts flow with the whispering river;
He hearkened also to ancient tales, and made them young again with his singing.

Then a flaming arrow of death fell on his flock,
and pierced the heart of his dearest!
Silent the music now, as the shepherd entered
the mystical temple of sorrow:
Long he tarried in darkness there: but when he came out he was singing.

And I saw the faces of men and women and children silently turning toward him;
The youth setting out on the journey of life, and the old man waiting beside the last mile-stone;
The toiler sweating beneath his load; and the happy mother rocking her cradle;

The lonely sailor on far-off seas; and the grey-minded scholar in his book-room;
The mill-hand bound to a clacking machine; and the hunter in the forest;
And the solitary soul hiding friendless in the wilderness of the city;

Many human faces, full of care and longing, were drawn irresistibly toward him,
By the charm of something known to every heart, yet very strange and lovely,
And at the sound of that singing wonderfully all their faces were lightened.

"Why do you listen, O you people, to this old
and world-worn music?
This is not for you, in the splendour of a new
age, in the democratic triumph!
Listen to the clashing cymbals, the big drums, the
brazen trumpets of your poets."

But the people made no answer, following in
their hearts the simpler music:
For it seemed to them, noise-weary, nothing
could be better worth the hearing
Than the melodies which brought sweet order
into life's confusion.

So the shepherd sang his way along, until he
came unto a mountain:
And I know not surely whether it was called
Parnassus,
But he climbed it out of sight, and still I heard
the voice of one singing.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

I

BIRTHDAY VERSES

DEAR Aldrich, now November's mellow days
Have brought another *Festa* round to you,
You can't refuse a loving-cup of praise
From friends the fleeting years have bound to you.

Here come your Marjorie Daw, your dear Bad Boy,
Prudence, and Judith the Bethulian,
And many more, to wish you birthday joy,
And sunny hours, and sky caerulean!

Your children all, they hurry to your den,
With wreaths of honour they have won for you,
To merry-make your threescore years and ten.
You, old? Why, life has just begun for you!

There 's many a reader whom your silver songs
  And crystal stories cheer in loneliness.
What though the newer writers come in throngs?
  You 're sure to keep your charm of only-ness.

You do your work with careful, loving touch, —
  An artist to the very core of you, —
You know the magic spell of " not-too-much ":
  We read, — and wish that there was more of
    you.

And more there is: for while we love your books
  Because their subtle skill is part of you;
We love *you* better, for our friendship looks
  Behind them to the human heart of you.

November 24, 1906.

II

MEMORIAL SONNET

THIS is the house where little Aldrich read
The early pages of Life's wonder-book:
With boyish pleasure, in this ingle-nook
He watched the drift-wood fire of Fancy spread
Bright colours on the pictures, blue and red:
Boy-like he skipped the longer words, and took
His happy way, with searching, dreamful look
Among the deeper things more simply said.

Then, came his turn to write: and still the flame
Of Fancy played through all the tales he told,
And still he won the laurelled poet's fame
With simple words wrought into rhymes of gold.
Look, here 's the face to which this house is frame, —
A man too wise to let his heart grow old!

(Dedication of the Aldrich Memorial at Portsmouth, June 11, 1908.)

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

OH, quick to feel the lightest touch
Of beauty or of truth,
Rich in the thoughtfulness of age,
The hopefulness of youth,
The courage of the gentle heart,
The wisdom of the pure,
The strength of finely tempered souls
To labour and endure!

The blue of springtime in your eyes
Was never quenched by pain;
And winter brought your head the crown
Of snow without a stain.
The poet's mind, the prince's heart,
You kept until the end,
Nor ever faltered in your work,
Nor ever failed a friend.

You followed, through the quest of life,
The light that shines above
The tumult and the toil of men,
And shows us what to love.
Right loyal to the best you knew,
Reality or dream,
You ran the race, you fought the fight,
A follower of the Gleam.

We lay upon your well-earned grave
The wreath of asphodel,
We speak above your peaceful face
The tender word *Farewell!*
For well you fare, in God's good care,
Somewhere within the blue,
And know, to-day, your dearest dreams
Are true, — and true, — and true!

(Read at the funeral of Mr. Stedman, January 21, 1908.)

LYRICS

DRAMATIC
AND PERSONAL

LATE SPRING

I

AH, who will tell me, in these leaden days,
Why the sweet Spring delays,
And where she hides, — the dear desire
Of every heart that longs
For bloom, and fragrance, and the ruby fire
Of maple-buds along the misty hills,
And that immortal call which fills
The waiting wood with songs?
The snow-drops came so long ago,
It seemed that Spring was near!
But then returned the snow
With biting winds, and all the earth grew sere,
And sullen clouds drooped low
To veil the sadness of a hope deferred:
Then rain, rain, rain, incessant rain
Beat on the window-pane,
Through which I watched the solitary bird
That braved the tempest, buffeted and tossed,
With rumpled feathers, down the wind again.
Oh, were the seeds all lost
When winter laid the wild flowers in their tomb?
I searched their haunts in vain

For blue hepaticas, and trilliums white,
And trailing arbutus, the Spring's delight,
Starring the withered leaves with rosy bloom.
The woods were bare: and every night the frost
To all my longings spoke a silent nay,
And told me Spring was far and far away.
Even the robins were too cold to sing,
Except a broken and discouraged note, —
Only the tuneful sparrow, on whose throat
Music has put her triple finger-print,
Lifted his head and sang my heart a hint, —
"Wait, wait, wait! oh, wait a while for Spring!"

II

But now, Carina, what divine amends
For all delay! What sweetness treasured up,
  What wine of joy that blends
A hundred flavours in a single cup,
  Is poured into this perfect day!
For look, sweet heart, here are the early flowers,
  That lingered on their way,
Thronging in haste to kiss the feet of May,
And mingled with the bloom of later hours, —
Anemonies and cinque-foils, violets blue
And white, and iris richly gleaming through
The grasses of the meadow, and a blaze
Of butter-cups and daisies in the field,
Filling the air with praise,

Filed

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III

Come, put your hand in mine,
True love, long sought and found at last,
And lead me deep into the Spring divine
That makes amends for all the wintry past.
For all the flowers and songs I feared to miss
Arrive with you;
And in the lingering pressure of your kiss
My dreams come true;
And in the promise of your generous eyes
I read the mystic sign
Of joy more perfect made
Because so long delayed,
And bliss enhanced by rapture of surprise.
Ah, think not early love alone is strong;
He loveth best whose heart has learned to wait:
Dear messenger of Spring that tarried long,
You 're doubly dear because you come so late.

NEPENTHE

YES, it was like you to forget,
And cancel in the welcome of your smile
My deep arrears of debt,
And with the putting forth of both your hands
To sweep away the bars my folly set
Between us — bitter thoughts, and harsh demands,
And reckless deeds that seemed untrue
To love, when all the while
My heart was aching through and through
For you, sweet heart, and only you.

Yet, as I turned to come to you again,
I thought there must be many a mile
Of sorrowful reproach to cross,
And many an hour of mutual pain
To bear, until I could make plain
That all my pride was but the fear of loss,
And all my doubt the shadow of despair
To win a heart so innocent and fair;
And even that which looked most ill
Was but the fever-fret and effort vain
To dull the thirst which you alone could still.

But as I turned the desert miles were crossed,
And when I came the weary hours were sped!
For there you stood beside the open door,
Glad, gracious, smiling as before,
And with bright eyes and tender hands outspread
Restored me to the Eden I had lost.
Never a word of cold reproof,
No sharp reproach, no glances that accuse
The culprit whom they hold aloof, —
Ah, 't is not thus that other women use
The power they have won!
For there is none like you, belovèd, — none
Secure enough to do what you have done.
Where did you learn this heavenly art, —
You sweetest and most wise of all that live, —
With silent welcome to impart
Assurance of the royal heart
That never questions where it would forgive?

None but a queen could pardon me like this!
My sovereign lady, let me lay
Within each rosy palm a loyal kiss
Of penitence, then close the fingers up,
Thus — thus! Now give the cup
Of full nepenthe in your crimson mouth,
And come — the garden blooms with bliss,
The wind is in the south,
The rose of love with dew is wet —
Dear, it was like you to forget!

HESPER

HER eyes are like the evening air,
Her voice is like a rose,
Her lips are like a lovely song,
That ripples as it flows,
And she herself is sweeter than
The sweetest thing she knows.

A slender, haunting, twilight form
Of wonder and surprise,
She seemed a fairy or a child,
Till, deep within her eyes,
I saw the homeward-leading star
Of womanhood arise.

ARRIVAL

ACROSS a thousand miles of sea, a hundred
leagues of land,
Along a path I had not traced and could not
understand,
I travelled fast and far for this, — to take thee
by the hand.

A pilgrim knowing not the shrine where he would
bend his knee,
A mariner without a dream of what his port
would be,
So fared I with a seeking heart until I came to
thee.

O cooler than a grove of palm in some heat-weary
place,
O fairer than an isle of calm after the wild sea
race,
The quiet room adorned with flowers where first
I saw thy face!

Then furl the sail, let fall the oar, forget the paths
of foam!
The Power that made me wander far at last has
brought me home
To thee, dear haven of my heart, and I no more
will roam.

DEPARTURE

OH, why are you shining so bright, big Sun,
And why is the garden so gay?
Do you know that my days of delight are done,
Do you know I am going away?
If you covered your face with a cloud, I 'd dream
You were sorry for me in my pain,
And the heads of the flowers all bowed would seem
To be weeping with me in the rain.

But why is your head so low, sweet heart,
And why are your eyes overcast?
Are they clouded because you know we must part,
Do you think this embrace is our last?
Then kiss me again, and again, and again,
Look up as you bid me good-bye!
For your face is too dear for the stain of a tear,
And your smile is the sun in my sky.

THE BLACK BIRDS

I

ONCE, only once, I saw it clear, —
That Eden every human heart has dreamed
A hundred times, but always far away!
Ah, well do I remember how it seemed,
Through the still atmosphere
Of that enchanted day,
To lie wide open to my weary feet:
A little land of love and joy and rest,
With meadows of soft green,
Rosy with cyclamen, and sweet
With delicate breath of violets unseen, —
And, tranquil 'mid the bloom
As if it waited for a coming guest,
A little house of peace and joy and love
Was nested like a snow-white dove

From the rough mountain where I stood,
Homesick for happiness,
Only a narrow valley and a darkling wood
To cross, and then the long distress
Of solitude would be forever past, —
I should be home at last.
But not too soon! oh, let me linger here
And feed my eyes, hungry with sorrow,
On all this loveliness, so near,
And mine to-morrow!

Then, from the wood, across the silvery blue,
A dark bird flew,
Silent, with sable wings.
Close in his wake another came, —
Fragments of midnight floating through
The sunset flame, —
Another and another, weaving rings
Of blackness on the primrose sky, —
Another, and another, look, a score,
A hundred, yes, a thousand rising heavily
From that accursed, dumb, and ancient wood, —
They boiled into the lucid air
Like smoke from some deep caldron of despair!
And more, and more, and ever more,
The numberless, ill-omened brood,
Flapping their ragged plumes,
Possessed the landscape and the evening light
With menaces and glooms.
Oh, dark, dark, dark they hovered o'er the place
Where once I saw the little house so white
Amid the flowers, covering every trace
Of beauty from my troubled sight, —
And suddenly it was night!

II

At break of day I crossed the wooded vale;
And while the morning made
A trembling light among the tree-tops pale,
I saw the sable birds on every limb,
Clinging together closely in the shade,
And croaking placidly their surly hymn.
But, oh, the little land of peace and love
That those night-loving wings had poised above, —
Where was it gone?
Lost, lost forevermore!
Only a cottage, dull and gray,
In the cold light of dawn,
With iron bars across the door:
Only a garden where the withering heads
Of flowers, presaging decay,
Hung over barren beds:
Only a desolate field that lay
Untilled beneath the desolate day, —
Where Eden seemed to bloom I found but these!
So, wondering, I passed along my way,
With anger in my heart, too deep for words,
Against that grove of evil-sheltering trees,
And the black magic of the croaking birds.

WITHOUT DISGUISE

IF I have erred in showing all my heart,
And lost your favour by a lack of pride;
If standing like a beggar at your side
With naked feet, I have forgot the art
Of those who bargain well in passion's mart,
And win the thing they want by what they hide;
Be mine the fault as mine the hope denied,
Be mine the lover's and the loser's part.

The sin, if sin it was, I do repent,
And take the penance on myself alone;
Yet after I have borne the punishment,
I shall not fear to stand before the throne
Of Love with open heart, and make this plea:
"At least I have not lied to her nor Thee!"

GRATITUDE

"DO you give thanks for this? — or that?"
No, God be thanked
I am not grateful
In that cold, calculating way, with blessing ranked
As one, two, three, and four, — that would be hateful.

I only know that every day brings good above
My poor deserving;
I only feel that, in the road of Life, true Love
Is leading me along and never swerving.

Whatever gifts and mercies in my lot may fall,
I would not measure
As worth a certain price in praise, or great or small;
But take and use them all with simple pleasure.

For when we gladly eat our daily bread, we bless
The Hand that feeds us;
And when we tread the road of Life in cheerfulness,
Our very heart-beats praise the Love that leads us.

MASTER OF MUSIC

(In memory of Theodore Thomas, 1905)

GLORY of architect, glory of painter, and sculptor, and bard,
Living forever in temple and picture and statue and song, —
Look how the world with the lights that they lit is illumined and starred,
Brief was the flame of their life, but the lamps of their art burn long!

Where is the Master of Music, and how has he vanished away?
Where is the work that he wrought with his wonderful art in the air?
Gone, — it is gone like the glow on the cloud at the close of the day!
The Master has finished his work, and the glory of music is — where?

Once, at the wave of his wand, all the billows of musical sound
Followed his will, as the sea was ruled by the prophet of old:
Now that his hand is relaxed, and his rod has dropped to the ground,
Silent and dark are the shores where the marvellous harmonies rolled!

Nay, but not silent the hearts that were filled by that life-giving sea;
Deeper and purer forever the tides of their being will roll,
Grateful and joyful, O Master, because they have listened to thee, —
The glory of music endures in the depths of the human soul.

STARS AND THE SOUL

(To Charles A. Young, Astronomer)

"TWO things," the wise man said, "fill me with awe:
The starry heavens and the moral law."
Nay, add another wonder to thy roll, —
The living marvel of the human soul!

Born in the dust and cradled in the dark,
It feels the fire of an immortal spark,
And learns to read, with patient, searching eyes,
The splendid secret of the unconscious skies.

For God thought Light before He spoke the word;
The darkness understood not, though it heard:
But man looks up to where the planets swim,
And thinks God's thoughts of glory after Him.

What knows the star that guides the sailor's way,
Or lights the lover's bower with liquid ray,
Of toil and passion, danger and distress,
Brave hope, true love, and utter faithfulness?

But human hearts that suffer good and ill,
And hold to virtue with a loyal will,
Adorn the law that rules our mortal strife
With star-surpassing victories of life.

So take our thanks, dear reader of the skies,
Devout astronomer, most humbly wise,
For lessons brighter than the stars can give,
And inward light that helps us all to live.

The world has brought the laurel-leaves to crown
The star-discoverer's name with high renown;
Accept the flower of love we lay with these
For influence sweeter than the Pleiades!

TO JULIA MARLOWE

(Reading Keats' Ode on a Grecian Urn)

LONG had I loved this "Attic shape," the brede
Of marble maidens round this urn divine:
But when your golden voice began to read,
The empty urn was filled with Chian wine.

PAN LEARNS MUSIC

LIMBER-limbed, lazy god, stretched on the rock,
Where is sweet Echo, and where is your flock?
What are you making here? "Listen," said Pan, —
"Out of a river-reed music for man!"

"UNDINE"

'T WAS far away and long ago,
When I was but a dreaming boy,
This fairy tale of love and woe
Entranced my heart with tearful joy;
And while with white Undine I wept,
Your spirit, — ah, how strange it seems, —
Was cradled in some star, and slept,
Unconscious of her coming dreams.

LOVE IN A LOOK

LET me but feel thy look's embrace,
Transparent, pure, and warm,
And I 'll not ask to touch thy face,
Or fold thee with mine arm.
For in thine eyes a girl doth rise,
Arrayed in candid bliss,
And draws me to her with a charm
More close than any kiss.

A loving-cup of golden wine,
Songs of a silver brook,
And fragrant breaths of eglantine,
Are mingled in thy look.
More fair they are than any star,
Thy topaz eyes divine —
And deep within their trysting-nook
Thy spirit blends with mine.

MY APRIL LADY

WHEN down the stair at morning
The sunbeams round her float,
Sweet rivulets of laughter
Are bubbling in her throat;
The gladness of her greeting
Is gold without alloy;
And in the morning sunlight
I think her name is Joy.

When in the evening twilight
The quiet book-room lies,
We read the sad old ballads,
While from her hidden eyes
The tears are falling, falling,
That give her heart relief;
And in the evening twilight,
I think her name is Grief.

My little April lady,
  Of sunshine and of showers,
She weaves the old spring magic,
  And breaks my heart in flowers!
But when her moods are ended,
  She nestles like a dove;
Then, by the pain and rapture,
  I know her name is Love.

A LOVER'S ENVY

I ENVY every flower that blows
Along the meadow where she goes,
And every bird that sings to her,
And every breeze that brings to her
The fragrance of the rose.

I envy every poet's rhyme
That moves her heart at eventime,
And every tree that wears for her
Its brightest bloom, and bears for her
The fruitage of its prime.

I envy every Southern night
That paves her path with moonbeams white,
And silvers all the leaves for her,
And in their shadow weaves for her
A dream of dear delight.

I envy none whose love requires
Of her a gift, a task that tires:
I only long to live to her,
I only ask to give to her
All that her heart desires.

THE HERMIT THRUSH

O WONDERFUL! How liquid clear
The molten gold of that ethereal tone,
Floating and falling through the wood alone,
A hermit-hymn poured out for God to hear!
O holy, holy, holy! Hyaline,
Long light, low light, glory of eventide!
Love far away, far up, — up, — love divine!
Little love, too, for ever, ever near,
Warm love, earth love, tender love of mine,
In the leafy dark where you hide,
You are mine, — mine, — mine!

Ah, my belovèd, do you feel with me
The hidden virtue of that melody,
The rapture and the purity of love,
The heavenly joy that can not find the word?
Then, while we wait again to hear the bird,
Come very near to me, and do not move, —
Now, hermit of the woodland, fill anew
The cool, green cup of air with harmony,
And we will drink the wine of love with you.

FIRE-FLY CITY

LIKE a long arrow through the dark the train is darting,
Bearing me far away, after a perfect day of love's delight:
Wakeful with all the sad-sweet memories of parting,
I lift the narrow window-shade and look out on the night.

Lonely the land unknown, and like a river flowing,
Forest and field and hill are gliding backward still athwart my dream;
Till in that country strange, and ever stranger growing,
A magic city full of lights begins to glow and gleam.

Wide through the landscape dim the lamps are lit in millions;
Long avenues unfold clear-shining lines of gold across the green;
Clusters and rings of light, and luminous pavilions, —
Oh, who will tell the city's name, and what these wonders mean?

Why do they beckon me, and what have they to show me?
Crowds in the blazing street, mirth where the feasters meet, kisses and wine:
Many to laugh with me, but never one to know me:
A cityful of stranger-hearts and none to beat with mine!

Look how the glittering lines are wavering and lifting, —
Softly the breeze of night, scatters the vision bright: and, passing fair,
Over the meadow-grass and through the forest drifting,
The Fire-Fly City of the Dark is lost in empty air!

Girl of the golden eyes, to you my heart is turning:
Sleep in your quiet room, while through the midnight gloom my train is whirled.
Clear in your dreams of me the light of love is burning, —
The only never failing light in all the phantom world.

THE GENTLE TRAVELLER

"THROUGH many a land your journey ran,
And showed the best the world can boast:
Now tell me, traveller, if you can,
The place that pleased you most."

She laid her hands upon my breast,
And murmured gently in my ear,
"The place I loved and liked the best
Was in your arms, my dear!"

SICILY, DECEMBER, 1908

O GARDEN isle, beloved by Sun and Sea, —
Whose bluest billows kiss thy curving bays,
Whose amorous light enfolds thee in warm rays
That fill with fruit each dark-leaved orange-tree, —
What hidden hatred hath the Earth for thee?
Behold, again, in these dark, dreadful days,
She trembles with her wrath, and swiftly lays
Thy beauty waste in wreck and agony!

Is Nature, then, a strife of jealous powers,
And man the plaything of unconscious fate?
Not so, my troubled heart! God reigns above
And man is greatest in his darkest hours:
Walking amid the cities desolate,
The Son of God appears in human love.

Tertius and Henry van Dyke, January, 1909.

THE WINDOW

ALL night long, by a distant bell,
The passing hours were notched
On the dark, while her breathing rose and fell,
And the spark of life I watched
In her face was glowing or fading, — who could tell? —
And the open window of the room,
With a flare of yellow light,
Was peering out into the gloom,
Like an eye that searched the night.

Oh, what do you see in the dark, little window, and why do you fear?
"I see that the garden is crowded with creeping forms of fear:
Little white ghosts in the locust-tree, that wave in the night-wind's breath,
And low in the leafy laurels the lurking shadow of death."

Sweet, clear notes of a waking bird
Told of the passing away
Of the dark, — and my darling may have heard;
For she smiled in her sleep, while the ray
Of the rising dawn spoke joy without a word,
Till the splendor born in the east outburned
The yellow lamplight, pale and thin,
And the open window slowly turned
To the eye of the morning, looking in.

Oh, what do you see in the room, little window, that
makes you so bright?
"I see that a child is asleep on her pillow, soft and
white,
With the rose of life on her lips, and the breath of life
in her breast,
And the arms of God around her as she quietly takes
her rest."

Neuilly, June, 1909.

TWILIGHT IN THE ALPS

I LOVE the hour that comes, with dusky hair
And dewy feet, along the Alpine dells
To lead the cattle forth. A thousand bells
Go chiming after her across the fair
And flowery uplands, while the rosy flare
Of sunset on the snowy mountain dwells,
And valleys darken, and the drowsy spells
Of peace are woven through the purple air.

Dear is the magic of this hour: she seems
To walk before the dark by falling rills,
And lend a sweeter song to hidden streams;
She opens all the doors of night, and fills
With moving bells the music of my dreams,
That wander far among the sleeping hills.

Gstaad, August, 1909.

JEANNE D'ARC

THE land was broken in despair,
The princes quarrelled in the dark,
When clear and tranquil, through the troubled air
Of selfish minds and wills that did not dare,
Your star arose, Jeanne d'Arc.

O virgin breast with lilies white,
O sun-burned hand that bore the lance,
You taught the prayer that helps men to unite,
You brought the courage equal to the fight,
You gave a heart to France!

Your king was crowned, your country free,
At Rheims you had your soul's desire:
And then, at Rouen, maid of Domrémy,
The black-robed judges gave your victory
The martyr's crown of fire.

And now again the times are ill,
  And doubtful leaders miss the mark;
The people lack the single faith and will
To make them one, — your country needs you
    still, —
        Come back again, Jeanne d'Arc!

O woman-star, arise once more
  And shine to bid your land advance:
The old heroic trust in God restore,
Renew the brave, unselfish hopes of yore,
        And give a heart to France!

Paris, July, 1909.

HUDSON'S LAST VOYAGE

June 22, 1611

THE SHALLOP ON HUDSON BAY

ONE sail in sight upon the lonely sea
And only one, God knows! For never ship
But mine broke through the icy gates that guard
These waters, greater grown than any since
We left the shores of England. We were first,
My men, to battle in between the bergs
And floes to these wide waves. This gulf is mine;
I name it! and that flying sail is mine!
And there, hull-down below that flying sail,
The ship that staggers home is mine, mine, mine!
My ship Discoverie!
The sullen dogs
Of mutineers, the bitches' whelps that snatched
Their food and bit the hand that nourished them,
Have stolen her. You ingrate Henry Greene,
I picked you from the gutter of Houndsditch,
And paid your debts, and kept you in my house,
And brought you here to make a man of you!
You Robert Juet, ancient, crafty man,
Toothless and tremulous, how many times

Have I employed you as a master's mate
To give you bread? And you Abacuck Prickett,
You sailor-clerk, you salted puritan,
You knew the plot and silently agreed,
Salving your conscience with a pious lie!
Yes, all of you — hounds, rebels, thieves! Bring back
My ship!
Too late, — I rave, — they cannot hear
My voice: and if they heard, a drunken laugh
Would be their answer; for their minds have caught
The fatal firmness of the fool's resolve,
That looks like courage but is only fear.
They 'll blunder on, and lose my ship, and drown, —
Or blunder home to England and be hanged.
Their skeletons will rattle in the chains
Of some tall gibbet on the Channel cliffs,
While passing mariners look up and say:
"Those are the rotten bones of Hudson's men
"Who left their captain in the frozen North!"

O God of justice, why hast Thou ordained
Plans of the wise and actions of the brave
Dependent on the aid of fools and cowards?

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Look, — there she goes, — her topsails in the sun
Gleam from the ragged ocean edge, and drop
Clean out of sight! So let the traitors go
Clean out of mind! We 'll think of braver things!
Come closer in the boat, my friends. John King,
You take the tiller, keep her head nor'west.
You Philip Staffe, the only one who chose
Freely to share our little shallop's fate,
Rather than travel in the hell-bound ship, —
Too good an English seaman to desert
These crippled comrades, — try to make them rest
More easy on the thwarts. And John, my son,
My little shipmate, come and lean your head
Against your father's knee. Do you recall
That April morn in Ethelburga's church,
Five years ago, when side by side we kneeled
To take the sacrament with all our men,
Before the Hopewell left St. Catherine's docks
On our first voyage? It was then I vowed
My sailor-soul and years to search the sea
Until we found the water-path that leads
From Europe into Asia.
I believe
That God has poured the ocean round His world,
Not to divide, but to unite the lands.

And all the English captains that have dared
In little ships to plough uncharted waves, —
Davis and Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher,
Raleigh and Gilbert, — all the other names, —
Are written in the chivalry of God
As men who served His purpose. I would claim
A place among that knighthood of the sea;
And I have earned it, though my quest should fail!
For, mark me well, the honour of our life
Derives from this: to have a certain aim
Before us always, which our will must seek
Amid the peril of uncertain ways.
Then, though we miss the goal, our search is crowned
With courage, and we find along our path
A rich reward of unexpected things.
Press towards the aim: take fortune as it fares!

I know not why, but something in my heart
Has always whispered, "Westward seek your goal!"
Three times they sent me east, but still I turned
The bowsprit west, and felt among the floes
Of ruttling ice along the Gröneland coast,

And down the rugged shore of Newfoundland,
And past the rocky capes and wooded bays
Where Gosnold sailed, — like one who feels his way
With outstretched hand across a darkened room, —
I groped among the inlets and the isles,
To find the passage to the Land of Spice.
I have not found it yet, — but I have found
Things worth the finding!

Son, have you forgot
Those mellow autumn days, two years ago,
When first we sent our little ship Half-Moon, —
The flag of Holland floating at her peak, —
Across a sandy bar, and sounded in
Among the channels, to a goodly bay
Where all the navies of the world could ride?
A fertile island that the redmen called
Manhattan, lay above the bay: the land
Around was bountiful and friendly fair.
But never land was fair enough to hold
The seaman from the calling of the sea.
And so we bore to westward of the isle,
Along a mighty inlet, where the tide
Was troubled by a downward-flowing flood
That seemed to come from far away, — perhaps
From some mysterious gulf of Tartary?

Inland we held our course; by palisades
Of naked rock where giants might have built
Their fortress; and by rolling hills adorned
With forests rich in timber for great ships;
Through narrows where the mountains shut us in
With frowning cliffs that seemed to bar the stream;
And then through open reaches where the banks
Sloped to the water gently, with their fields
Of corn and lentils smiling in the sun.
Ten days we voyaged through that placid land,
Until we came to shoals, and sent a boat
Upstream to find, — what I already knew, —
We travelled on a river, not a strait.

But what a river! God has never poured
A stream more royal through a land more rich.
Even now I see it flowing in my dream,
While coming ages people it with men
Of manhood equal to the river's pride.
I see the wigwams of the redmen changed
To ample houses, and the tiny plots
Of maize and green tobacco broadened out
To prosperous farms, that spread o'er hill and dale
The many-coloured mantle of their crops;

I see the terraced vineyard on the slope
Where now the fox-grape loops its tangled vine;
And cattle feeding where the red deer roam;
And wild-bees gathered into busy hives,
To store the silver comb with golden sweet;
And all the promised land begins to flow
With milk and honey. Stately manors rise
Along the banks, and castles top the hills,
And little villages grow populous with trade,
Until the river runs as proudly as the Rhine, —
The thread that links a hundred towns and towers!
And looking deeper in my dream, I see
A mighty city covering the isle
They call Manhattan, equal in her state
To all the older capitals of earth, —
The gateway city of a golden world, —
A city girt with masts, and crowned with spires,
And swarming with a host of busy men,
While to her open door across the bay
The ships of all the nations flock like doves.
My name will be remembered there, for men
Will say, "This river and this isle were found
By Henry Hudson, on his way to seek
The Northwest Passage into Farthest Inde."

Yes! yes! I sought it then, I seek it still, —
My great adventure and my guiding star!
For look ye, friends, our voyage is not done;
We hold by hope as long as life endures!
Somewhere among these floating fields of ice,
Somewhere along this westward widening bay,
Somewhere beneath this luminous northern night,
The channel opens to the Orient, —
I know it, — and some day a little ship
Will push her bowsprit in, and battle through!
And why not ours, — to-morrow, — who can tell?
The lucky chance awaits the fearless heart!
These are the longest days of all the year;
The world is round and God is everywhere,
And while our shallop floats we still can steer.
So point her up, John King, nor'west by north.
We 'll keep the honour of a certain aim
Amid the peril of uncertain ways,
And sail ahead, and leave the rest to God.

Oberhofen, July, 1909.